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'The perfect coverup'

Congress probes spy agencies

By JOHN COOK

The past two weeks have been a bad dream for the U.S. "intelligence community."

Each day brought at least one startling new revelation of illegal activities engaged in by the CIA and the FBI that have helped to further erode their already shaky credibility. The agencies are not happy about the exposes and have taken steps to stop them.

Among the recent disclosures was the fact that the CIA has been opening the mail of U.S. citizens on such a broad scale that even some of Richard Nixon's mail was monitored during his 1968 presidential campaign. Nixon's name was included in a list furnished by the CIA of several "prominent" public figures whose mail was opened, photographed and the copies filed away as part of the CIA's routine clandestine surveillance program.

On another front, testimony at the Senate Intelligence Committee—chaired by Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho)—revealed the FBI had conducted widespread burglaries, called "black bag jobs" by bureau officials, from 1952 to at least 1966. The burglaries were carried out under an elaborate "do not file" system that virtually guaranteed no record of the burglary operations could be uncovered, even if subpoenaed by a court.

The House Select Intelligence Committee was meanwhile engaged in a head-on confrontation with the White House over access to documents and officials for its investigation of the dozen agencies involved in "intelligence" activities. The confrontation stemmed from the White House refusal to provide classified documents subpoenaed earlier in September by the House committee.

The CIA agreed to supply the bulk of the requested material Sept. 30 minus some 50 deletions. The committee chairman said he would press for a full House vote of support anyway. The committee is especially interested in intelligence activities relating to the crisis in Cyprus and the Tet offensive of 1968.

Rep. Otis Pike (D-N.Y.), who heads the committee, announced Sept. 29 that the House will be asked to vote on a resolution supporting the committee's demand for unlimited access to the information. President Ford and CIA head William Colby had refused to supply further information after the committee released to the press one of the initial installments of the subpoenaed documents.

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